

REDMOND PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

March 9, 2005

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Snodgrass, Commissioners Allen, Dunn, McCarthy, Parnell, Petitpas, Querry

STAFF PRESENT: Terry Marpert, Kurt Seeman, Joel Pfundt, Redmond Planning Department

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Snodgrass in the Public Safety Building Council Chambers. The absence of Commissioners McCarthy and Parnell were excused.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was approved by acclamation.

APPROVAL OF MEETING SUMMARY

A. February 23, 2005

The meeting summary as written was approved by acclamation.

ITEMS FROM THE AUDIENCE – None

PUBLIC HEARING AND STUDY SESSION

Transportation Master Plan

Chair Snodgrass opened the public hearing.

Mr. David Carpenter, address not given, praised staff for their efforts in putting together the plan which has a number of excellent ideas for improving the livability of the city. He voiced concern, however, with regard to the 160th Avenue extension. The River Trail neighborhood is one of the nicest neighborhoods in the city as far as walkability; it evokes the very image the city is trying to promote. By diverting traffic from the Woodinville-Redmond Road to 160th Avenue is going to destroy the neighborhood; it will split the neighborhood in half and it will no longer be possible to easily walk across 160th Avenue, and the noise levels will rise dramatically. Willows Road goes through a mostly commercial area and connects with 124th Avenue. If the roadway were extended to Woodinville, traffic would no longer have to go through Woodinville to get to Redmond, and would better open the tourist area around the wineries in Woodinville.

Chair Snodgrass asked staff to provide those in the audience with a brief presentation as to what the Transportation Master Plan (TMP) is and where the process is, including the status of the 160th Avenue project. Senior Engineer and project manager Kurt Seeman said the TMP describes how the city intends to plan for transportation improvements through the year 2022. Redmond has not had such a plan in the past. In the past the focus has been primarily on the automobile and auto capacity; the proposed TMP takes more of a multimodal approach to planning and considers all forms of getting around the city. Chapter 6 in the plan includes a listing of all facilities; projects not on the list are not currently planned to be constructed. There are some projects in the plan that will increase capacity, but fundamentally the plan is about improved connections and transportation choices.

Senior Transportation Planner Joel Pfundt said part of the process of developing the TMP included a review of all projects in the current Transportation Facilities Plan, which covers the years 1997-2012. Projects suggested by other plans and efforts were also considered. The full list of projects was broken into three categories: committed projects that are funded for construction within the next six years; connections, which are projects that will add new connections to the overall system for one or more modes of travel; and widening projects, which will add automobile capacity to existing roadways and improve certain intersections.

Mr. Pfundt said the work of analyzing the various projects yielded the fact that it matters little which projects get constructed in the future, except the connection projects were found to function better and reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled. There simply is not enough money to throw at the capacity problem. The focus should be instead on projects that will enhance community character. The projects selected for inclusion in the plan are those which support the major centers, the multimodal corridors, and the connections projects.

One of the projects that made it onto the final list is the 160th Avenue extension. There is still some debate as to whether it is a capacity or a connection project. On the positive side, the project significantly reduces cut-through traffic on Education Hill, though it creates cut-through traffic in a neighborhood that currently has none. The project provides for a quicker transit connection between the downtown and Education Hill, and better transit access to the residents of the River Trail neighborhood. Based on the modeling, the project does not increase passthrough traffic in the downtown. The project does involve environmental impacts to wetlands, increases noise, reduces air quality, and has significant impacts to the local neighborhood. Traffic speeds could also become an issue because of the steep downhill slope; there are always safety concerns where speeding is an issue. The cost of the project, which is estimated at \$20 million, is also a drawback.

Mr. Pfundt said the recommendation of staff is to not include the 160th Avenue extension project in the final draft of the TMP on either the 2022 plan or the thoroughfare plan.

Ms. Ginger Alonzo, 15988 NE 95th Way, said one of the reasons she moved to the River Trail community because it is accessible for walking and biking, and because it feels safe. The neighborhood is also well connected by road to other areas. She indicated support for the TMP in the way it is written without the inclusion of the 160th Avenue extension project. Redmond values community and is interested in both the environment and people. The focus of the TMP on connections is excellent. Redmond should be a community, not a waystop along the way to somewhere else. Connections are important, but they should not be allowed to the extent that they will harm neighborhoods.

Mr. David Rossiter, 15719 NE 95th Way, said he chose to move to the River Trail neighborhood because the neighborhood is attractive and walkable. Neighbors do not get to know other neighbors if they only travel from place to place in their cars. Allowing the 160th Avenue extension project to go ahead in the name of adding capacity would not be a good thing to do. He said he would not oppose creating a low-capacity connection to Redmond 74, provided it does not look attractive as a cut-through route. Routing traffic off the Woodinville-Redmond road to an improved and extended Willows Road represents the best suggestion.

Mr. Ed Masao(?), 17249 NE 125th Street, said over the past couple of months while the plan was being developed the assistance provided by staff to the community has been professional and helpful. He said the opening of 172nd Avenue between 124th Avenue and 116th Avenue will negatively impact a number of neighborhoods and residents. The proposed connection will not help either the city or the neighborhoods that will be directly impacted; it would serve primarily to give commuters from Woodinville and other areas an additional north-south short-cut. The argument has been made that the project will increase access for the very neighborhoods that are opposed to the project. The neighborhood is opposed in having increased traffic volumes, cut-through traffic, and increased vehicle speeds and noise levels. If the roadway is pushed through, the character of the neighborhood will change dramatically and significantly in a negative way, which may result in lower property values.

Mr. Jay Burgevon(?), 12403 172nd Avenue NE, concurred with the previous speaker. He said he owns Valley Furniture on Redmond-Woodinville road, and daily someone has to go out and pick up pop cans and other debris in front of the store. He said he has lived in the Sunrise Ridge neighborhood for 23 years. If 172nd Avenue is opened as proposed, there will be an increase in trash to contend with, and traffic volumes and speeds will increase. The project will do nothing to enhance the character of the community. Instead, traffic will be dumped onto Abbey Road creating a bottleneck. The roadway will still not provide any direct route into the city.

Ms. Judith Simpson, 10655 Redmond-Woodinville Road, said she lives in the middle of the Redmond 74 project. She opposed the notion of extending 160th Avenue or widening it in any way. The project will not solve any traffic problems, nor will it benefit the local neighborhood.

Mr. Dean Tyler, 15634 NE 95th Way, said on the whole the TMP is a good plan, especially the self image it presents. He opposed extending 160th Avenue and said he was happy to see it excluded from the draft plan. Community character is important, and extending the roadway will destroy part of the local neighborhood, all for marginal benefit from a capacity standpoint. The real issue is not capacity but chokepoints at intersections. Much of the focus should be on the capacity of intersections.

Mr. Glenn Gregory, 15956 NE 95th Way, concurred with the statements made previously opposing the extension of 160th Avenue. He thanked the Commission for its dedication to the community.

Mr. Jim Rose, 15423 NE 108th Place, a resident of the Valley Estates neighborhood, voiced concern over the proposed widening of the Redmond-Woodinville Road from 160th Avenue to 124th Avenue. The project would negatively affect the neighborhood generally and his house specifically given its proximity to the roadway. Improving the road with bike lanes and sidewalks would be good, but five lanes of traffic would be detrimental.

Mr. Pfundt indicated that the widening of Redmond-Woodinville Road from 160th Avenue to 124th Avenue is not included in the final draft of the TMP. Mr. Seeman noted that the Council has asked for a reconsideration of the 160th Avenue project, and the conversation will have to include what to do with Redmond-Woodinville Road to the north of where 160th Avenue would connect.

Mr. Sat Djieka(?), 17420 NE 126th Place, address not given, spoke regarding the roadway between the junction of 172nd Avenue, 124th Avenue to 116th Avenue(?). The local neighborhood is both quiet and peaceful. There are many families with children who walk and bike along the road. If the road is constructed, the nature of the community will change, and safety will become a concern.

Mr. Mark Travers(?), 15908 NE 93rd Way, added his voice to those opposing the extension of 160th Avenue for the reasons outlined by the previous speakers, including traffic volumes, vehicle speeds, safety, and quality of life. He indicated disappointment that the Mayor has come out in favor of the project.

Ms. Kathy Gerber, address not given, said extending 160th Avenue would have a negative impact on the quality of life of the residents of the neighborhood. The noise along 160th Avenue is already too high. The neighborhood is warm, friendly and welcoming, as well as safe. That character should be preserved.

Ms. Jeri Tyler, address not given, said she has been a resident of the River Trail neighborhood for 18 years. One of Redmond's strengths has always been the fact that it welcomes public input. She said 160th Avenue should not be extended because it will greatly harm the character of the neighborhood.

Ms. Dean Ramsey, 16154 NE 93rd Way, said she moved to her present home from the Redmond Plateau in part because of the traffic problems there and the loss of the sense of community that has resulted. She said her current neighborhood is open to walking, which the local residents do a lot of. The sense of community will be harmed if 160th Avenue is extended. Focusing on Willows Road and revising it so it can do what the proposed 160th Avenue project would do makes the most sense.

Ms. Elsie Godfrey, 17235 NE 125th Avenue, agreed with those who voiced opposition to the 172nd Avenue project. The project will not accomplish anything other than to reduce the quality of life for the local neighborhood.

The Commission by acclamation elected to keep the public hearing open to allow for additional testimony on March 16 and March 23.

Chair Snodgrass thanked everyone for their testimony. He allowed that the Council will have the final say on all projects in the TMP and suggested that the public should follow their deliberations closely.

****BREAK****

Chair Snodgrass asked the Commissioners to have ready for the next study session a list of projects that merit discussion, either pro or con. He suggested the Commission should make a specific recommendation to the Council regarding the 160th Avenue project given its controversial nature.

Mr. Pfundt reiterated that from a traffic perspective, the modeling showed that if only the widening projects were constructed, the volume-capacity ratios in the city would be worsened. The connections projects had a slightly better outcome in the modeling, but still made things worse. The connections projects did the best, and it was no surprise to anyone that the best results were obtained when all of the projects were modeled together. The modeling showed that throwing great amounts of money into capacity projects will not make much of a difference overall. As much as possible should be done to support the multimodal corridors and the centers, as well as connections.

Every project considered for the list was analyzed with regard to whether or not it will implement the vision of the policies in the Transportation Element and the Comprehensive Plan. The projects were all ranked. To a large degree, the projects on the financially unconstrained list ended up on the thoroughfare plan; the TFP projects are financially constrained to the level of fund the city anticipates it will have for transportation projects over the next 17 years.

Mr. Seeman allowed that some have questioned the assumptions with regard to revenues, and the notion of revenues and project costs increasing at relatively the same rate over time.

Mr. Pfundt said the high-priority projects are all on the TFP list in Chapter 6, as are a number of BROTS projects. All of the projects were evaluated based on community character, and those that were seen as doing something positive to enhance community character are marked accordingly. The projects were also evaluated with regard to which ones add vehicle capacity and freight mobility.

Commissioner Dunn referred to the matrix and asked why there was no column for transit. She asked if the "Prepare for HCT" column is intended to include transit. Mr. Pfundt said transit is addressed in that column and in the multimodal corridors column.

Commissioner Dunn asked if the bike, pedestrian and transit objectives will be accomplished by constructing all of the multimodal corridor projects described in the plan. Mr. Pfundt allowed that to some degree bike, pedestrian and transit are addressed by each of the columns. Commissioner Dunn said she wanted to see in each column on the matrix an indication that the projects shown will meet the objectives.

Mr. Pfundt pointed out that one of the things that needs to be done to prepare for HCT in Redmond is to grow transit ridership. With an increased ridership base, it will be much easier to make the argument in favor of bringing HCT to the city. One means of meeting the goal will be to provide a more direct route from the 83rd Street park and ride lot to SR-520.

The attention of the Commissioners was called to the list of projects that were considered during the process but which for one reason or another did not make it onto the final list. Mr. Pfundt explained why each project was not included, noting that because some of the projects are included in the BROTS agreement, it will be necessary to work with Bellevue in reconsidering them.

Mr. Pfundt said project 51 (confusion: project 51 or 71(a) or 71(b)?), the project to improve Red-Wood Road in the section between where the 160th extension comes in and 87th, may be a candidate for taking off the rejected list and adding it back to the proposed project list. The project would include sidewalks on both sides as well as bike lanes.

Commissioner Dunn suggested that it would be helpful to have the project dollar amounts listed alongside the projects on the matrix.

Chair Snodgrass asked the Commissioners to have ready for the next meeting a list of any projects to be discussed further, as well as issues surrounding the multimodal corridors.

Chair Snodgrass brought the attention of the Commission to the issues list and ES-2, the Transportation Master Plan priorities. He noted that the City Council on March 4 and 5 expressed the concern that priorities such as community character are not expressed. The explanation given by staff was that the issue of community character underlies everything in the plan. He asked if staff has contemplated writing a new introductory paragraph to explain that position. Mr. Seeman said a preamble would put the table in the Executive Summary into context.

Commissioner Petitpas said she would like it clearly stated that community character is a high priority. If included as a preamble, the notion could get lost. Commissioner Allen said she would prefer to see a bar added running across the top or bottom of the chart reading “community character and land use goals.” There was general agreement in favor of the suggestion.

Commissioner Dunn asked what the source of (“these four bullets”) is. Chair Snodgrass said TR-16 provided the policy basis. Mr. Seeman said the four bullets embody a number of policies that were used as the foundation for the plan. The bullets represent the four priorities for the plan. He said the question to be asked is whether or not the four priorities are consistent with the policies.

Chair Snodgrass allowed that there is a lot that is missing. Commissioner Dunn concurred and said to ensure plan-based concurrency, the project list will have to be all-inclusive. The four bullets on their own will not ensure plan-based concurrency.

Chair Snodgrass suggested that a fifth bullet should be added focused on improving the pedestrian environment. Mr. Seeman said the pedestrian environment is covered under the notion of supporting centers, and the plan also talks about pedestrian facilities in the multimodal corridors and pedestrian connections. While the topic is not called out specifically, it shows up under many of the bullets. The chart is intended to be a simple means of letting people know what the plan is all about.

Commissioner Dunn proposed adding under column three an objectives section with four bullets: capacity, Redmond travel/transit, local transit connectivity, and improved bicycle and pedestrian systems. Chair Snodgrass suggested that “providing travel choices” would be better wording. He agreed that capacity should be added. Mr. Marpert said staff would return with some proposed language for ES-1.

Commissioner Dunn said the table sets the framework for the entire document. The framework should flow through the entire document to ensure plan-based concurrency. The bullets should reflect the objectives and measures of Chapter 4, so that Chapter 6 can be checked off against the same objectives and measures. Mr. Marpert said those are not concurrency requirements; they are just measures to make sure the system is performing well. Concurrency means building the system proportionate to the land use growth; the document should not make it any more complicated than that.

Chair Snodgrass argued that the chart does not list plan-based concurrency items. The chart could be thrown out completely and the notion of plan-based concurrency would still exist standing on its own. The chart contains only interim checklists which will be used to see if plan-based concurrency is working. So long as development of the system proceeds at the same rate as development, the city will be concurrent. The way the city will check to see if the plan is good will be to look at the levels of service. If the levels of service get out of whack, it will mean that the plan is wrong; it will not necessarily mean

the city will be out of concurrency. The minute the city moves to formalize level of service standards, it will be right back to where it is currently.

Mr. Marpert said the direction in the Transportation Element is to build the plan proportionate to the land use growth of the city; it does not direct use of the table framework as level of service standards.

Commissioner Querry observed that the matrix establishes three priorities: public safety and health, adequate maintenance, and plan-based concurrency. She asked how the bullet points that follow in the boxes should be defined. Mr. Pfundt said the first two are partial lists of the programs used to address the first two priorities. The bullet points under the third category are criteria.

Chair Snodgrass proposed eliminating the bullet points altogether, noting that the language of the introduction covers the points adequately. At the very least the confusion needs to be clarified. Mr. Pfundt argued that if the bullets are removed from the table it will become much more difficult to evaluate the various projects. Getting rid of the programs in the first two boxes could serve to eliminate some of the confusion.

Mr. Marpert offered to work offline with Commissioner Dunn to clarify her perspective. She said simply using TR-16 would be adequate.

With regard to Figure ES-2, Chair Snodgrass noted that the first and second points are unclear. It was agreed that some verbs should be added to the points, and Mr. Marpert agreed to work on it. Chair Snodgrass also called for consistency in using the words “standards,” “objectives” and “measures.” Mr. Marpert allowed that the bullet points are not standards and should probably be called measures in that they take the temperature of the system for different travel modes. Mr. Pfundt pointed out that they are called objectives in Chapter 7. Mr. Marpert said he would agree with using “objective” provided it is not confused with “standard,” which has a legal connotation. It was left to staff to propose the right word.

There was agreement not to discuss issue three on the list having to do with TR-8 and TR-32, policies that were previously adopted.

STUDY SESSION

Proposed RCDG Amendment for an Innovative Housing Pilot Program

This item was removed from the agenda.

REPORTS

Chair Snodgrass reported that the Friday and Saturday meetings with the City Council were very well run and proved to be quite profitable. Staff did an excellent job.

SCHEDULING/TOPICS FOR NEXT MEETING(S)

Mr. Marpert briefly reviewed the topics to be covered in upcoming meetings.

ADJOURN

Chair Snodgrass adjourned the meeting at (?)(?) p.m.

Minutes Approved On:

Recording Secretary
